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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4423
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 3765
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 2279
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 1280
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0677
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1939
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 5953
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4220
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 2145
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

UNCLAS SANTIAGO 000127

SIPDIS

STATE FOR R/MR, I/PP, WHA/BSC, WHA/PDA, INR/IAA

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TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [EFIN](#) [CI](#)

SUBJECT: CHILE MEDIA REPORT - FEBRUARY 11

Leading Stories

1. Dailies highlighted that President Bachelet now has a scheduled meeting with Fidel Castro on Friday. Front page news included President Obama's rescue package, noting "disappointment" in the plan triggered a drop in stock markets worldwide.

U.S.-Related News

2. In interviews with regional dailies in four different cities in southern Chile, Agricultural Attach Joe Lopez highlighted the positive ongoing work between U.S. and Chilean health and sanitary entities. He said the result of this effort is reflected in the outstanding quality of Chilean products -- equal to those produced in the United States or in any industrialized country. Lopez also stressed the beneficial results of the bilateral FTA, noting the importance of having a strong agriculture sector. "Not depending on anyone for food makes you powerful," he said. Lopez explained that this trip was to learn about the specific concerns for mid-sized agricultural producers in southern Chile.

3. Editorial entitled, "Obama's Seal on the Crisis"
"Obama has been very clear in admitting that the economy is facing enormous challenges and that its recovery will be slow. Although he has just started to fight a crisis inherited from the previous administration, his first efforts, unfortunately, have not yielded the expected results (Diario Financiero, business and financial, circ. 30,000, 2/11).

Cuba

4. President Bachelet has scheduled a meeting with Fidel Castro on Friday. This would make her the first Chilean president to meet with the Cuban leader since 1972 (All dailies, 2/11).

5. Foreign Minister Alejandro Foxley released a speech made on February 5 by Chile's permanent representative to international organization in Geneva, Carlos Portales. In his remarks, Portales praised Cuba's progress in education and health. He also valued Cuba's announcement that it would ratify the International Convention on Forced Disappearance of Persons and the International Civil and Political Rights Pact. However, he recommended Cuba to allow the entry of a special rapporteur on torture, which Cuba has already announced it would do. The release of Portales' remarks is a government effort to counter the opposition and the DC's criticism over Bachelet's decision not to meet with the Cuban dissidents (La

Tercera, 2/11).

Economy

16. A Central Bank report shows that experts foresee a growth of just 1.2% for Chile for 2009. This would be the lowest growth rate in the last decade (El Mercurio, La Tercera, conservative, independent, circ. 101,000, 2/11)

17. To mitigate the effects of the financial crisis, the government in March will begin paying the benefits under its program to help those earning less than \$441,000 pesos a month. The program will pay all workers registered with the Chile Solidario Program a \$40,000-peso bonus per child (or legal recipient). The benefit will also go to those who are or were in the labor market, but are currently receiving unemployment insurance, are widows, handicapped, or unwed mothers (La Nacion, government-owned, editorially independent, circ. 4,200, 2/11).

Human rights

18. Swiss authorities will review a request for political asylum filed by eleven-year old Relmutry Cadin, on the grounds that her family is being persecuted in Chile. Cadin is the child of Mapuche leader Juana Calfunao, who is serving a four-year prison term. In 2006, Calfunao and a group of Mapuches beat two prosecutors, and in 1996 physically assaulted the director of the government's Indigenous Affairs Committee. Her husband, sister and other family members are also in prison for the same crimes. The child's aunt, Flor Calfunao, filed the petition (La Tercera, 2/11).

Corruption

19. The Investigation Police (PDI) arrested its own Counternarcotics Brigade official Gonzalo Araya. The officer sought to sell narcotics seized during DPI operations (La Nacion, 2/11).

SIMONS